GLOBAL VILLAGE LEARNING

2025 Annual Report to the School Community

School Registration No. 1989

Our Vision

Empowering learners to build communities that positively impact the world.

Published in accordance with Schedule 4, clause 18 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic) and clause 60 of the Australian Education Regulation 2023 (Cth).

1. Welcome from the Director of GVL Community and Learning

When people first encounter Global Village Learning, they rarely arrive empty-handed. They bring a mental template: a Steiner school they once visited, compliant attendance in a mainstream classroom, a half-remembered article about alternative education. The projection is understandable, and often incomplete. So, before I describe who we are, let me spend a moment on who we are not, because at GVL the difference is not one of aesthetics. As per our Vision Statement, it is a difference in how we understand power.

Every school makes decisions about power, whether it announces them or not. Someone decides what counts as achievement, who may speak, whose objectives matter, and which measures of a young person will be recorded, applauded, and remembered. Most schools inherit these decisions from the culture around them and call the result common sense. We prefer to make these decisions consciously.

Alternative education models are often lumped into a group, perceived as a homogenous mass of fringe otherness. But just because we're 'not mainstream' doesn't mean we're all the same. In a Steiner school, authority rests in a developmental philosophy and the long tenure of a central teacher; the child unfolds, but along a path already drawn. Reggio Emilia offers a genuinely beautiful environment and the image of the capable child, yet the curriculum still emerges through adult documentation and interpretation, and largely in the early years. Montessori is our nearest relative, and we borrow gratefully from her prepared environment, though even there the materials and their sequence quietly carry the adult's map of what should come next. None of this is criticism; each of these traditions has our respect. It is simply observation: learning power over students is enacted differently in each.

Our mission asks something different of us: *empowering learners to build communities that positively impact the world*. Empowerment happens by making decisions about power. It means young people at GVL interview prospective staff, choose the furniture, shape the buildings they will learn in, and lead learning that adults support rather than direct. We do not pretend that power disappears here. We negotiate it, visibly, every day. That is harder to run than a timetable, and we would not trade it.

Dan Symons
Director of GVL Community and Learning

2. About Global Village Learning

Global Village Learning is an independent, co-educational, not-for-profit school (a company limited by guarantee) governed by a Board of Directors responsible for strategy, compliance and the appointment of the Executive Director. Our learning community serves young people from four to twenty years old.

Learning is organised through mixed-age Learning Hubs rather than year-level classrooms:

- Foundations and Play (around four to nine years)
- Exploration and Discovery (around nine to twelve years)
- Entrepreneurship and Social Impact (around twelve to sixteen years)
- Pathways and Futures (around sixteen to twenty years)

Within each Learning Hub, Guides (our teachers and support staff) empower young people to learn through EDventures, project cycles and Learning Huddles, inside a predictable Daily Rhythm. Progression is by readiness rather than birthday, and every young person's pathway is documented in an Individual Learning Plan. Senior young people can complete the VCE Vocational Major or the Victorian Pathways Certificate, approved for delivery at New Gisborne in 2025.

3. 2025 Highlights

- Enrolment grew to 197 young people by December 2025, continuing growth from 141 at the end of 2024.
- Attendance rose from 77 per cent to 87.5 per cent.
- Works commenced on the grounds of our Castlemaine Campus, preparing the site for campus registration in 2027.
- The appointment of Campus Leads Ruben Cahill and Dan Symons, alongside a number of star recruits drawn from across education and from well beyond it, because a community preparing young people for the world benefits from adults who have thrived in a wide range of contexts and have diverse skills and experiences.

4. Attendance

	2024	2025
Enrolment (end of year)	141	194
Attendance rate	77%	87.5%

The Regulations ask us to describe and analyse our attendance. The description is short: across 2025, our young people attended 87.5 per cent of the time, up from 77 per cent the year before.

The analysis is more interesting. We are wary of treating attendance as a compliance exercise; a young person marched to school under duress appears in the data as a success, and that tells us nothing worth knowing. We treat attendance as testimony. Young people vote daily, with their feet and their families' resolve, on whether a place deserves their investment of time, and a rise of more than ten percentage points in a single year is a verdict. It coincided with a deliberate year of stabilisation: more consistent Guide teams, clearer daily rhythms, and learning shaped around what Learning opportunities young people actually care about. We did not chase the number. We built a place worth attending, and the proportion of time young people attended rose.

Attendance is recorded in Compass, absences are followed up promptly with families, and patterns of absence are addressed relationally through the young person's Guide, who knows them best.

5. Our Guides

In 2025, our teaching team comprised 12.1 full-time equivalent VIT Guides and 18.1 full-time equivalent Expert Guides. VIT Guides are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, as the law requires and as families should simply expect. Education support and operational staff are reported separately from teaching staff below, because conflating the two serves nobody.

Leadership within our Hubs also matured during 2025. Nicole Mill and Janet Dipilla stepped into Hub Lead positions, and our Exploration and Discovery Hub moved to a distributed leadership model, sharing responsibility across the Guide team rather than concentrating it in one chair. Late in the year, Campus Leads Ruben Cahill and Dan Symons commenced, and Kym Wolfenden took over from Janet as the year closed. Each of these transitions was made the GVL way: gradually, relationally, and with the least disruption to young people.

Qualification	Number of guides
Doctorate	2
Masters degree	7
Postgraduate diploma or certificate	10
Bachelor degree	24
Diploma	11

6. Learning at GVL

Learning at GVL is learner-led and adult-supported; like Montessori, we see parents as the primary educators. Young people address the eight learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum through EDventures, projects and Learning Huddles, with Individual Learning Plans personalising how each young person covers the curriculum, not whether they do. Explicit teaching happens at the point of need, inside work the young person has chosen, which is where it holds.

This can be misunderstood. We are not a school that abandons the curriculum in favour of vibes, and we are not a school that delivers it in rows. The world of possibilities is the map: wide, real, uneven, and full of possible directions. The curriculum is the guide, helping young people understand the terrain, recognise what is worth noticing, and build the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to move through it well. In consultation with their Guide and parents, each young person charts a journey through that landscape. They hold the compass, because the direction must ultimately become their own; they set the pace, because deep learning cannot be forced into someone else's stride. The adults walk alongside, ask better questions, point out risks and openings, and help each learner connect personal purpose with the learning they are responsible for undertaking.

Learning at Global Village Learning in 2025 continued to be shaped by young person agency, authentic experiences, wellbeing and community connection. Early in the year, GVL's Learning Huddles were recognised internationally when they were shortlisted among 38 education solutions from 200 entries as an example of learner-led education.

Young people continued to shape learning through their interests, with Discovery Labs designed around areas such as media, ecology, engineering, storytelling, the arts and sport. Learning experiences emphasised inquiry, real-world projects, portfolio creation and community contribution.

Wellbeing remained central to learning. Guides reflected on the importance of play, kindness, connection and restoration, recognising that meaningful learning is strengthened when young people have opportunities to recharge and experience a strong sense of belonging.

Experiential learning continued to produce powerful outcomes. Reflections from Senior Camp highlighted young people stepping outside their comfort zones, trying new experiences, strengthening

friendships and supporting one another. Guides observed growth in confidence, inclusion, resilience and wellbeing through these shared experiences.

Throughout the year, guides also explored how emerging technologies, including AI, could support more personalised learning pathways while maintaining strong privacy safeguards.

Together, these experiences reinforced GVL's belief that young people thrive when they have agency in their learning, opportunities to pursue meaningful interests, and strong connections with guides, families and community.

7. Student Learning Outcomes

Statewide testing

The Regulations ask for a description and analysis of our young people's performance in statewide tests. Here is both, offered with some honesty about what such tests can and cannot see.

Ten young people participated in NAPLAN in 2025. The remaining eligible families exercised their right to withdraw, as most GVL families do each year, and we respect both choices equally. With a cohort of ten, statistical analysis would be theatre: one young person having a difficult morning moves the school average further than any teaching program could. We report the participation faithfully and decline to pretend the sample tells us something it cannot.

The deeper point is not about participation rates. NAPLAN, the ATAR, and their relatives are not merely optional instruments that families may choose to participate in or avoid; they are default measures of educational success in the wider culture. They define, often silently, what schools are assumed to be for, what achievement is presumed to look like, and whose version of success is granted authority. A young person can perform beautifully on a standardised test while learning mostly that their worth is assessed by someone else. We decline that lesson. We do not decline scrutiny.

Progressive Achievement Tests: Scrutiny we choose

Because we welcome evidence, we test more than we are required to. In 2025, our young people completed the ACER Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) in Reading and Mathematics, a whole-of-school measure we administer by choice, at fourteen times the participation of our mandated testing.

Measure (2025)	Median scale score	Middle 50% of learners	2024 median
PAT Reading (140 results)	122.8	102.9 to 131.6	117.1
PAT Maths (140 results)	118.9	108.7 to 128.3	113.6

Both medians improved on the previous year's testing, and the middle half of our learners sits comfortably within the scale ranges shown. We use these data as they are best used: formatively, at the level of the individual young person, to notice growth, catch gaps early and inform the next conversation between a Guide and a learner. We do not use them to rank children, and we never will.

The measure we hold highest

At GVL, young people define what they want to achieve, the level to which they want to achieve it, and the ways they choose to get there. They are then supported and held accountable to their own

definitions of success, documented in their Individual Learning Plans and reviewed through Learning Huddles. Progress against self-set objectives is the measure most aligned with our mission, because a community cannot be built by people waiting to be told what matters.

8. Wellbeing and Child Safety

We do not do 'in trouble' at GVL, and we do not use suspension or expulsion as rituals of shame. What we do is require young people to take responsibility: reflect on what was said and done, understand its impact on others, and proactively repair relationships and trust. Our Custodians of Community framework holds that a mistake is not an identity, and that learning to repair a relationship is among the most valuable capabilities a person can carry into adulthood.

That warmth sits is not about fuzzy feelings. GVL maintains a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and a full suite of child safety procedures aligned to Ministerial Order 1359 and the Child Safe Standards. Our Wellbeing Coordinator serves as Child Safety Champion; all Expert Guides and volunteers hold current Working with Children checks; child safety incidents and mandatory reporting obligations are recorded and actioned through our student management system; and our high adult-to-young-person ratios and campus visibility mean our community is genuinely seen and known. Our policies are published at www.gvl.vic.edu.au/policies, and we encourage families to read them.

9. Financial Performance

A report of the school's 2025 financial activities, drawn from the audited financial statements, is set out below. GVL directs its resources to the things that empower young people: Guides, learning spaces, and the growth of the community.

2025 CALENDAR YEAR RESULTS JANUARY TO DECEMBER	ACTUAL YTD
Revenue from operating activities	**$**
Private income	1,068,104
Investment income	18,109
Other income	17,435
Government Recurrent Grants	5,495,916
Total revenue	**6,599,564**
Expenditure from operating activities	
Salaries and employee benefits	(3,069,623)
Total salaries	**(3,069,623)**
Operating expenses	(1,211,928)
Finance costs	(39,363)
Depreciation	(209,744)

Total non-salaries	**(1,461,035)**
Total expenses	**(4,530,658)**
Total operating surplus	**2,068,906**

10. Public Reporting and Distribution

This report is distributed to the school community, published on the GVL website, and provided to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority for publication on the State Register, in accordance with Schedule 4, clause 18 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017. Additional school performance information required under clause 60 of the Australian Education Regulation 2023 is available through the My School website at myschool.edu.au.

No further reports were required under State or Commonwealth funding agreements for 2025 beyond those referenced in this document.

11. Looking Ahead

2026 is already carrying this work forward. As this report is published:

- The 'poshables' (posh portables) are being installed on the New Gisborne campus and will open for learning in Session 3 (August 2026), giving the Castlemaine Program, Pathways and Futures, and Performing Arts spaces worthy of them.
- Our “Big Shed” (a BIG space for BIG projects and vocational learning) is due for completion in Session 3, 2026 and will hold a range of serious trade equipment (i.e. tradie toys) for VCE Vocational Major completion and hands on learning fun.
- Works continue on the Castlemaine site progressing steadily toward the site's opening during 2027.
- Our Executive Director, Peter Hutton, is leading the written articulation of the GVL model, so that who we are is substantiated on paper as clearly as it is lived on campus.
- A parent learning series is underway, shaped by family feedback, beginning with a three-part sequence on how and why GVL uses artificial intelligence in young people's learning. The AI does not teach; young people learn; Guides support.
- Our first Community Learning Day brought young people, Guides and parents together to share learning as equals, a format we intend to make a tradition.
- Independent cultural work with consultant Rowena Morrow is helping us see ourselves clearly as we move beyond our earliest years into a more considered maturity: how we make decisions, how roles fit together, and how we secure mission-critical principles as we grow.
- Young person-led decision making continues to deepen, from a learner committee that researched and selected the senior Hubs' technology use policy to young people redesigning how their own shared spaces run. A solution handed down is a rule; a solution built together is a commitment.
- The stability we promised families is holding: more consistent Guide teams, careful relational handovers when roles change, and new Guides joining us from education, allied health and beyond.